

4.
A
PREPARATORY DISCOURSE 4
ON
CONFIRMATION:

Originally drawn up
For the Use of Young Persons
In the Diocese of NORWICH.

By THOMAS KNOWLES, D.D. K
Preacher at St. MARY's in BURY.

THE TENTH EDITION.

I P S W I C H:

PRINTED BY SHAVE AND JACKSON.

SOLD BY J. SHAVE, IPSWICH; T. LONGMAN, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON; AND ALL THE BOOK-SELLERS IN NORFOLK AND SUFFOLK.

M,DCC,LXXXIV.

[PRICE 3D, OR 20S, A HUNDRED.]

377

PREPARATORY DISCOURSE

OF

CONFIRMATION:

Originally drawn up

For the Use of Young Persons

In the Diocese of Norwich



BY THOMAS WILKS, D.D.

Printed at St. Mark's Church

THE NORTH EDITION

1783

PRINTED BY CHANE AND JACKSON

SOLD BY J. CHANE, T. JACKSON, T. LOMAX, BAKER,

NORWICH, AND ALL THE BOOKS

SELLERS IN NORWICH AND SUFFOLK.

WILKS

[Price 6s. 6d. per copy]

A

PREPARATORY DISCOURSE

ON

CONFIRMATION.

My young Brethren,

AS you will be called upon, at the approaching Visitation of your Bishop, to attend the solemn and important Office of Confirmation, it will not be an unprofitable Employment either for your Thoughts or mine, if I should explain to you, in the mean Time, the Nature, Design, and Necessity of the Business, that you are to be engaged in ; the Preparation of Heart and Mind, that is necessary for the proper Discharge of it ; the Behaviour that will become you, during the Performance of it ; and the Duties, that will arise to you, after your Confirmation.

I. You have been taught that your Godfathers and Godmothers promised, for you at your Baptism, such a Profession of Faith and Obedience, as you were not then able to promise for yourselves. Baptism itself is a Covenant between God and the Infant, wherein, as
in

in all other Covenants or Agreements, there is a Promise to be made, on the Part of the Person to be baptized, of certain Duties to be performed; and on God's Part, of certain Graces and Privileges to be granted. Infants are not capable of making any such Promise immediately by themselves, and yet, after the Example of Christ and his Apostles, it is fit, that they should be placed, as soon as possible, under the Guardianship of their God, by being admitted into the visible Church of his Son: Upon which Account, the Wisdom of the Church has secured their purchased Title to Salvation, by appointing Sureties for their Faith and Obedience, who should promise in the Name of Infants, what they should afterwards be obliged to perform: By which Act, they engage themselves to see the Children instructed in the Principles of that Faith, which they themselves profess to believe; and nurtured in the Practice of those Duties, which will be required, as the Conditions of his Inheritance, from every Member of the mystical Body of Christ, when he arrives at the Years of Discretion.

Indeed, our natural Parents are under an higher Obligation than others can be, to provide for the spiritual Improvement, as well as the temporal Welfare of their helpless Offspring: And it must be allowed, that where due Care is taken, in these Respects by the Parents, there both the Obligation and Necessity of the Sponsors will become less: But Parents may be thoughtless, and neglect their Duty; or being mortal, may be deprived of the Opportunity of doing it. Both these Cases are the common Infirmities of human Life; and therefore if *All* were to depend upon the good Disposition, or upon the Length of Days of the Parents alone, you perceive, that the Minds of the Children might be unluckily left in a State of heathenish Ignorance and Barbarity.

It

It is no good Argument against the Use of this Custom, that it is often abused : The best Things are subject to the like : I fear it is too often owing to an improper Choice of those Sureties, who are either too ignorant themselves to understand what they promise and vow for another ; or too young and heedless to attend to it. The reasons of such a Choice are frequently blameable ; and where is the Wonder, that no spiritual Good arises, when no spiritual Good was aimed at ? But with proper Management, no better Provision can well be devised against the Hazard, to which Infants are exposed, from the Death, or Negligence of the Parents, than the solemn Engagement of at least three Sureties, whose Concern it is, to see, that the baptized Infants be religiously and virtuously brought up ; and after proper Instruction in the Principles of Christianity, to take Care, that their young Disciples be confirmed by the Bishop.

For although it is expedient for the godly Security of the Infant State, that those should answer to God and the Church for your Instruction in Righteousness, who might be able, and by their public Vow obliged, to bring you up in the Nurture and Admonition of the Lord : Yet it is not reasonable that this important Trust should still rest upon their Heads, when your own *Senses are sufficiently exercised to discern both Good and Evil* ; and you ought therefore to be accountable, without another's Hazard, to your own *Master for your standing or falling*. Besides that, the very End and Design of the Covenant and Promises, which were made in your Name, at your Baptism, shew that they can continue no longer in Force upon your Sureties, than 'till you arrive at an Age, which may have supplied you with a sufficient Knowledge for these religious Purposes : For they only undertook to help the present Want of Understanding in your Infancy ; and therefore

fore it is not to be supposed, that *their* Faith will avail *you* longer, than such a Want of Understanding in you remains unavoidable.

Your Godfathers and Godmothers first entered into Covenant with God for you, from a Principle of Tenderneſs, which all mankind naturally have for the help-leſs Souls of Infants, that they might ſecure the Benefits of that Covenant to them, by their Admiſſion into it, as early as may be; after they are become Partakers, by their Birth, of the original Corruption, and manifold Infirmities of human Nature. The Benefits, which they ſecure hereby, are no leſs than the Grace of God in this World, and eternal Salvation in another: But theſe were no otherwiſe to be obtained for you, than by Repentance from dead Works, and Faith in our Lord Jeſus Chriſt: You, whiſt a new-born Infant, could neither repent nor believe; and therefore others promiſed to ſee that you ſhould be trained up in the Diſcipline of both, 'till you became able to perform both: If, after that, you neglect to make your proper Advancements in thoſe Chriſtian Doctrines, which may qualify you for the right Underſtanding of the Vow, already made for you; or if you reſuſe to take that Vow upon yourſelf, when you ſafely may, and ought to do it, you then, in effect, deliberately forfeit your Title to the Benefits, which God, by your Sureties, had ſettled upon you, as your Inheritance: And renounce that Covenant, which they, in Compaſſion to your Soul, had ſealed between God and you. Indeed, it is the Part and Duty of your Sureties to ſee, that you be inſtructed in theſe Things, in order to your being confirmed by the Biſhop in due Time; and accordingly, it is wiſely ordered by the Rubric, that every one ſhould have a Godfather or a Godmother as a Witneſs of their Confirmation; nevertheless, *their* Vow is to be looked upon as *yours*: And *what* they promiſed in
your

your Name, *that* you are to declare to be the Matter of your own Choice.

This explains to you at once the Nature and End of Confirmation. It is the second necessary Step in the Covenant of Grace ; as it is a Promise, in your own Person, to profess and believe all the Articles of that Faith, and to perform all those Commandments of God's Will, which your Godfathers and Godmothers had promised for you at your Baptism, and to which all the Blessings of the Gospel, and the Privileges of being Members of Christ's Church are annexed. Till you have made this public Declaration of your Faith and Obedience, in the Presence of God and his Church, you are not to be accounted *altogether Christians*.

Mistake me not ; I do not mean, that if any die between the Age of Baptism and Confirmation, they will therefore lose the Salvation that is purchased for them by Christ : This is more than we can affirm, even if any die before the Sacrament of Baptism can be administered to them : But when they have arrived at that Age, which enjoys the Use of Reason, and may therefore be reckoned the Years of Discretion, if they then defer the Opportunity of ratifying and renewing the Treaty, which was before entered into between God and them, upon Terms, they still continue *Babes in Christ*, and consequently, their Covenant of Mercy is left imperfect.

This may be well illustrated by the usual Method of establishing what St. Paul calls a *Man's Covenant* : For the *Heir, as long as he is a Child*, is directed by *Tutors and Governors*, in the Management of his Inheritance, *until the Time appointed by the Will of his Father* : And whatever they engage for, in his Behalf, holds good between the Parties concerned : But when the ful-
ness

ness of the Time is come, that gives him the Possession and free Use of his own affairs, his Guardians are no longer necessary, nor have they any further Power, to confirm what he undertakes to do: Every future Agreement, if he would have it valid, must be made in his own Name, and he must openly declare it to be his own Act and Deed. His spiritual Concerns are just upon the same Footing: Christ has bequeathed to us an Inheritance, of which we are Joint-Heirs with himself: The Terms of it are such, as we cannot engage ourselves to perform, whilst our State of Minority remains: And therefore Sureties are appointed to preserve the Covenant intire between God and us: But when we are in a Capacity, by the Terms of the Covenant, to engage for ourselves, we are then bound to remove the Obligation from them; and if we would still continue intitled to the Privileges of Inheritance, we must, in our own Persons, perform the Conditions of it; otherwise our former Claim becomes void, and our Profession of Christianity but an empty Title.

Our Church, it is true, has affirmed *Baptism to be sufficient to Salvation*: But this it speaks only of *Children who shall die before they commit actual Sin*; for such, it is added in the old Common-Prayer Books, will receive no Detriment, by having their Confirmation deferred. But, say the same Books, “When
 “ Children come to that Age, that partly by the Frailty
 “ of their own Flesh, partly by the Assaults of the
 “ World, and the Devil, they begin to be in Danger
 “ to fall into sundry Kinds of Sin, then it is most meet
 “ that Confirmation be ministred to those that be bap-
 “ tized, that by Imposition of Hands and Prayer, they
 “ may receive Strength and Defence, against all Temptations to Sin, and the Assaults of the World, and
 “ the Devil.” This sets the use and Benefit of Confirmation before you in another light. *We can of ourselves*

selves do nothing. Our Passions are too strong, and our Reason too weak to guide us in the right Way: Temptations from without, and Solicitations from within, increase the Hazard of a Miscarriage; and a Compliance with either, which, without some Assistance, becomes unavoidable, will ruin and undo us for ever. These Difficulties beset us the most easily, when we are the most unfit to resist them; and they are such, as nothing less than the Spirit of God can at any Time surmount: At our Baptism this Grace is conveyed to us, as the Principle of Life, but it does not enable us to work, until it is strengthened in us by Confirmation.

It is in this Respect with the *spiritual Man*, as it is with the *natural*. We are born into the World with all the Limbs and Joints that are necessary for Motion; but they are without Use, till repeated Trials and greater Strength shall have taught us the proper Application of them. In like Manner we are admitted into the Church, which is our new Birth, by the Baptism of Grace, with every Qualification, that will be necessary to conduct us in the Paths of Righteousness; But we are not furnished with sufficient Supplies of ghostly Strength to remove the Hindrances, that we may meet with in the Way, till the quickening Influence of the same Holy Ghost shall have increased in us, what is prayed for at our Confirmation, *the Spirit of Wisdom and Understanding; the Spirit of Council and Might; the Spirit of Knowledge and true Godliness.*

This holy Rite of *laying on of Hands* at Confirmation, which is derived from the Practice of Christ's Apostles, was in their Days attended with the miraculous Gift of the Holy Ghost: And altho' those miraculous Powers, that followed upon it, have long since ceased among Christians; yet since we believe, with St. Paul, that it is God, who worketh in us, both to will and to do of his

B

good

good Pleasure; and upon Christ's Authority, that *if we ask for his Assistance, we shall receive it*; we have all imaginable reason to believe further, that the same outward means will be still effectual to the obtaining of the like inward Blessings; so far at least, as to *direct, sanctify, and govern both our Hearts and Bodies in the Ways of God's Laws, and in the Works of his Cammandments*. For by the gracious Influence of the same Holy Spirit, which regenerates us at our Bapism, we are disposed to set about our Duty, and fortified with Vigour to go through it; our good Resolutions are forwarded; our Doubts removed; our Understandings enlightened; and our Hearts cleansed. He adds Warmth to all our Devotions here; and that possesses us with a joyful Assurance, that our Prayers will be rewarded by his Acceptance hereafter.

By the laying on of Hands, the Blessing that is asked for is peculiarly restrained to the Persons, upon whom it is pronounced: And the spiritual Father, who thus performs a religious Act, by the laying on of his Hands, professes that he acts by divine Authority; it having been the usual Way, by which the person, upon whom a Blessing was craved, has, from the Beginning of the World, been presented unto God by Prayer. But, tho' the Blessing, that attends Confirmation, be conveyed thro' the Hands of the Bishop, who is Successor of the Apostles in this Office: Yet, in humble Acknowledgment that the precious Graces of the Holy Ghost are derived from the abundant Mercy of Heaven, from whence *every good and perfect Gift cometh*, he, at the same Time, sues to the *Father of Lights* for the Blessing which he wishes to bestow. His Prayers to that Intent are available as well for others, as for himself; and accordingly, as a very ancient Writer (a) piously

(a) Pseudo-Euseb. Emissen, Ser. de Pent.

observed in his Time, “ the Holy Ghost which descendeth with saving Influence upon the Waters of Baptism, doth there give that Fulness, which sufficeth for Innocency, and afterwards exhibiteth in Confirmation an Augmentation of further Grace.” In Consequence of which, adds the learned Mr. *Hooker* (b), “ the Fathers of the Church from the earliest Ages held Confirmation as an Ordinance Apostolic, always profitable in God’s Church, altho’ not always accompanied with equal Largeness of those external Effects, which gave it Countenance at the first.”

This Difference of spiritual Advantage, attending the Administration of the Service, may be partly owing to the different Necessities of the Church in different Ages, and partly to the different Qualifications of the Persons to whom it is administered: I shall therefore proceed,

II. *Secondly*, To that Preparation of Heart and Mind which will make you worthy to be admitted to this Service, and to receive the Benefits of it. The Ceremony itself is a solemn Dedication of yourselves to the Service of Almighty God: And as such, it requires of you, that you should well consider and understand the Nature of that Service; which consists in the Obligation of your Baptismal Vow; what you are to renounce; what you are to believe; and what you are to do the Remainder of your Lives. All this may be *easily* learned and practiced, before the Mind is corrupted, beyond the Hopes of Recovery, with the Habits of Sin; and it is *necessary* to be learned and practiced at your Entrance into the World, when such wholesome Instructions may

(b) *Hooker’s Ecc. Pol.* B. 5. § 66.

guard you against the manifold Temptations, which you will be sure to meet with in your passage thro' it.

In order to understand the Nature of your Baptismal Vow, you need only to recollect what you are taught by your Church Catechism concerning the Promise, which your Godfathers and Godmothers made for you in that Sacrament: For the Substance of *their* Promise is the Extent of your Obligation. The Terms upon which you stand, are, Repentance, Faith, and Obedience, as the whole Duty of a Christian: Repentance is expressed by renouncing the Devil, the World, and the Flesh: Faith, by believing all the Articles of the Christian Faith: And Obedience, by keeping God's holy Will and Commandments, and walking in the same all the Days of your Life. To renounce the Devil and all his Works, is in general to forsake and avoid all Sin and Wickedness: He is the first Author of it, and therefore it may be truly reckoned to be his Work. But besides this general Sense, there are many particular Sins which carry with them the Marks of that great Enemy of your Souls: such are, all profane cursing and swearing; all blasphemous and idle Thoughts or Words concerning God and his religion; a Neglect of divine Worship; an unhallowing of the Sabbath-Day, either by doing nothing that is good upon it, or by doing wickedly; All Deceit and Lying; all Revenge and Malice; envying the Happiness of your Neighbours, or tempting them by your Example or Persuasion, into those sinful Follies, which may rob them of that and their Innocency together. All these are the dangerous Offsprings of Satan: They are absolutely condemned by the Gospel of Christ; and consequently, destructive of your eternal Salvation.

To renounce the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World, is to disregard, as trifling and insignificant, all
such

such gaudy Appearances of earthly Grandeur, either in luxurious Diet, or in Excess of Apparel, as may administer to a Haughtiness of Spirit, unlawful Pleasures, or the thinking too highly of yourselves, and too meanly of others. It is to shun, as much as you can, the Conversation of evil Companions, and to abhor, as much as you ought, the Infection of their evil Customs; *so as not to follow, or be led by either.*

To renounce all the sinful Lusts of the Flesh, is to deny yourselves the immoderate Enjoyment of such unlawful Desires, as your corrupt Nature or fleshly Appetites, if left unrestrained, might intice you to gratify yourselves in. The Apostle has given you a List of these, in *Gal. v. 19, 20.* and told you the Consequence of indulging them; that *they who do such Things shall not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven.* Among the rest, are *Adultery, Fornication, and Uncleaness,* which make *the Members of Christ* to become *the Members of an Harlot: Lasciviousness, or Wantonness* of Behaviour in your Discourse, or Actions: *Drunkenness, Revelings,* and such like: All Sorts of Intemperance, in eating, drinking, or Diversions, which may deprive you of your Reason, or corrupt it. All these impoisoned Pleasures you must detest and abandon; for they will first debase your Souls, and then destroy them.

The next Branch of the Baptifmal Covenant is Faith: By which you are obliged to believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith: and what they are, you are instructed by what is commonly called the Apostles Creed; which contains every Truth, that you are bound to believe, relating to the whole Godhead, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost: That God the Father made and preserves you: That God the Son was born, died, and rose again to redeem you: And that God the Holy Ghost sanctifies your Hearts; puts good Desires into your
Minds;

Minds ; and enables you to bring those good Desires into Action. Your Faith in these Articles of Religion is not to be a formal or customary Assent only to the Truth or Certainty of them ; but it must inflame your Affection to the God, who gave you Being, and protects you in it ; it must kindle your Love towards Jesus Christ, who died and suffered so much for your Sakes ; it must engage you to hate all those sinful Temptations, which, if they were complied with, would stifle the pious Motions, and quench the Influence of the Spirit of God. All this is required of you upon Motives of the greatest Importance, because you are to expect a Resurrection of the Body, and a Life everlasting.

After the Profession of a right Faith follows the third Part of the Baptismal Vow, the Rule of an acceptable Obedience to God. This is fully prescribed by God in the Ten Commandments ; which Body of Laws was indeed at first appointed to be a Rule of Faith and Obedience to the Children of *Israel* ; but they are so wisely calculated for all the Purposes of Religion, as in a larger and spiritual Sense, to be the proper Standard of Duty and Service to the Household of Faith in all succeeding Generations. They teach you, more particularly, your Duty towards God, your Duty towards your Neighbour, and your Duty towards yourselves.

Your Duty towards God contains the Acknowledgment and Observance of that perfect Love and Reverence, that Homage and Service, which you owe to God, as your Creator and Preserver. It requires of you, that you be careful never to offend him wilfully ; that you put your whole Trust in his Providence ; pray to him in your Distresses ; thank him for his Blessings ; honour his holy Name and Word ; and serve him truly all the Days of your Life.

Your

Your Duty towards your Neighbour comprehends all that Respect and Submission; which is due to your Superiors; all that Love and Friendship, which should unite the Hearts of Equals; all that Humility and Tenderneſs, which may endear you to your Inferiors; all that Faithfulneſs and Honesty, Candor and Truth in your Dealings and Converſation, which is the common Right of all Men.

Your Duty towards yourſelves directs you to keep your Bodies in Temperance, Soberneſs and Chaſtity; that your Thoughts be chaſte; your Words innocent; and your Actions modeſt: That you do not covet or deſire what is another Man's Property; but with Patience and Contentedneſs labour to get an honeſt Living in that State of Life in which it ſhall pleaſe God to place you.

After the Ten Commandments, and this brief Expoſition of the Duties they contain, naturally follows a Direction to pray for Aſſiſtance from on High, to perform them. The Lord's Prayer and its Explanation are taught for this Purpoſe, that we might know *what we ſhould pray for, as we ought*; and what God will grant us, when we pray for it properly. For the ſeveral Petitions of this ſhort Prayer have reſpect unto the Honour of God, who made us; and the Promotion of his Glory, who redeemed us; unto the daily Preſervation of our Bodies, and the everlaſting Salvation of our Souls. It is therefore a neceſſary Part of the Inſtructions, which *Babes in Chriſt* will receive, to ſtrengthen their own honeſt Endeavours for procuring a ſufficient Meaſure of all the good Things of the preſent Life, and above all, to eſtabliſh a reaſonable Security to themſelves, that they fall not ſhort of the Happineſs of that which is to come.

Thus

Thus are all the Branches of moral Duties and all the Principles of practical Religion taught and explained on a regular Plan in the short and easy Form of the Church-Catechism. It is therefore wisely ordained, that all young Persons should be instructed in it, before they are brought to the solemn Office of Confirmation : For as it is but reasonable that you should release your Sureties from the religious Engagements which they have entered into for your Sakes ; so it is highly expedient that you should understand the Nature of those Engagements, before you are admitted to take them upon yourselves. The Catechism is the best Preparation that could be devised for this Purpose : For that begins, where all religious Duties begin, with the first Profession of the Christian Name ; And it carries you regularly, thro' all the several Branches of your high Calling, to the last most solemn Service of the Sanctuary, I mean, the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which is the comfortable Seal of your past Redemption, and the gracious Earnest of your future Bliss.

The principal Bulwarks of the Christian Religion are the two Sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper ; which, as they are administered in our Church, will carry your Thoughts backwards to the Origin of your sinful State, and forwards to the Means of Forgiveness in it. The Meaning and Nature of these Sacraments are carefully explained to you in the latter Part of the Catechism, that you may easily understand upon what Terms you at first entered into the Church of Christ ; and by what means you may gain a Title to all the Benefits of the New Testament. By Baptism you are taught, *how*, your original Sin is washed away ; and by the Lord's Supper, *how* your actual Guilt may be pardoned. Our Saviour accordingly instituted the one to be a standing Rite of Admission into his holy Catholic Church, from the Beginning ; and he has com-
manded

manded the other to be a standing Memorial of his dying for it, to the End of the World.

In your Infancy, the Repetition of the Catechism is a Work only of the *Memory*, and may be got by *rote*, without the least *Knowledge* of the Christian Faith: So that the Order in the Common-Prayer that directs your Godfathers and Godmothers to *bring you to the Bishop to be confirmed by him, so soon as you can say the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the Ten Commandments, and also can answer to the other Questions of this short Catechism*, does not mean, that at whatever Age you can do this, you are immediately qualified for, and ought therefore to be admitted to Confirmation: The *Understanding* should be applyed to, as well as the *Memory*: And as you are to enter into a solemn Covenant with God, upon your own Knowledge and Choice, you should be able to give some Account of the Reason of your Choice, which ought to be founded upon some Proofs, you can produce for the Truth of your Faith.

A great deal of the Advantage, arising from this Institution, is lost by bringing Children too young to be confirmed, before they have seriously considered the Importance of their Baptismal Vow, or desire, with Earnestness enough, to undertake the Observance of it. Indeed, the Grace of Baptism might suffice for all the Purposes of Religion, and the Means of eternal Life, were it not, that the State of our spiritual Being is so miserably hindered and impaired by the Habits of Sin after Baptism: Upon this Account, before such a solemn Dedication of yourselves to the Service of God, you ought to examine yourselves well concerning all the Sins that you have been guilty of in Thought, Word, and Deed, against God, your Neighbour, and yourselves: Confessing them before God; declaring your hearty Sorrow and Repentance for them; earnestly
C begging

begging God's Pardon and Forgiveness; stedfastly resolving to forsake them all, and faithfully promising, with this early Impression of Religion upon your Minds, to live agreeably to it for the future. Thus prepared in Heart and Mind, you will receive with Joy the Blessing, that will be pronounced upon you: *The Lord will defend you with his heavenly Grace, that you may continue his for ever; and daily increase in his Holy Spirit more and more, until you come unto his everlasting Kingdom.* Especially, if after a suitable Preparation for the solemn office, you consider well,

III. In the third Place, the devout Behaviour, that will become you, during the Performance of it.

It will naturally strike you with some Awe and Reverence to observe the Circumstances, that attend the Celebration of this Rite. To add to the Solemnity of its Nature, it is performed at the Altar, *the Holy of Holies*, as it may be called, where only the highest Duties of the Sanctuary are performed. The Person, who administers it, bespeaks its Importance, as much as the Place; for the Power of dispensing this Grace has always been reserved to the Bishops, the immediate Successors of the Apostles; which Privilege they never communicated to the Deacons; not even to *Philip*, the First and Head of that Order of Men, who are allowed to preach and baptize. Their Pattern is followed in the Ceremony, as well as in the Choice of the Person: For they conferred the Holy Ghost itself by the laying on of Hands, which was the greatest Benefit belonging to the Christian Dispensation. But above all, you are reminded, that you are about *to renew the solemn Promise and Vow, that was made in your Name at your Baptism, in the Presence of God and of the Congregation.*

Consider

Consider then, when you enter into the Church for this Service, that you are about to undertake, for yourselves, what is the most important Business of your whole Life, and upon which depends all your Hopes of Happiness in another. Possess your Hearts with such a deep Sense of the fatal Guilt and Consequences of Sin, as may make you fearful of ever falling into the Snares of it for the future. Keep in your Minds the Dread Majesty, almighty Power, inflexible Justice, and infinite Mercy of the living God; who has revealed his Will to you, that it might influence your Conduct; and whose sacred Word is read to you, in this holy Place, that Good and Evil might be set before you, and Reward or Punishment might justly follow upon your own Choice.

When you are asked by the Bishop whether you acknowledge yourselves bound to believe and to do all those Things, which your Godfathers and Godmothers undertook for you at your Baptism; recollect, with Humility and Thankfulness, how great and high are the Privileges of being made Members of Christ, Children of God, and Heirs of Heaven, and therefore, how you shall endeavour to serve God acceptably for these Blessings, in all the Strictness and Purity of his Gospel. Resolve firmly to renounce the Devil and all his Works; to condemn, from your Soul, the Poms and Vanities of this wicked World; and to detest, as the Bane of your Happiness, the sinful Lusts of the Flesh; and with this Sincerity of Heart, and godly Fear, answer distinctly and audibly, *I do*.

As you approach to the Altar, let your outward Decency be expressive of the inward Devotion of your Heart; not gazing about you with Wantonness, nor crouding before others irreverently; but walk with Caution upon the *Holy Ground*, and kneel down with the profoundest Submission before the Throne of Grace.

When

A Preparatory Discourse

When the Bishop is offering up his Prayer to God in your Behalf, and his Hand is laid upon your Head, let your Heart and Thoughts be lifted up unto God, *from whence cometh your Help*; let your Attention be fixed all along upon the Means of Grace; and at the End of it say a hearty *Amen*: *Even so Lord Jesus, be it unto thy Servant, according to thy Word.*

Whilst others are receiving the Imposition of Hands, return to your own Place, and there employ your Thoughts upon the Duties of the Covenant, which you have been renewing: recollect what those Sins are, by which you have been most tempted to break it: Resolve to be more careful to abstain from them for the Time to come: and as you have Opportunity, add to these Meditations the following Prayer,

ASSIST me mercifully, O God, with thy Grace and holy Spirit, that I may be enabled to keep these Vows and holy Resolutions, which I have promised, in thy dread Presence, to perform. It is with a Heart full of Thankfulness, that I acknowledge my first Admission by Sureties into thy Church at my Baptism; and I now willingly take that solemn Engagement upon myself; imploring thy gracious Help, that I may faithfully persevere in it unto my Life's End. Give me unfeigned Repentance for all the Errors of my Life past, and stedfast Faith in thy Son Jesus; and prevent me, O my God, from ever returning again unto any of the Sins and Offences of my Youth, by mortifying within me, all my evil and corrupt Affections; that as I grow in Age, I may grow in Grace. Grant this for Jesus Christ's Sake, my blessed Lord and Saviour. *Amen.*

As soon as the Service is ended, before you depart from the hallowed Place, offer up, in secret, some such pious Ejaculation, as this:

Pardon,

Pardon, O God, all the Weaknesses or Defects, which I may have been guilty of, in the Performance of this solemn Duty, and bless with more abundant Protection my going out, and my coming in, from this Time forth for evermore. *Amen.*

If upon looking back, you find that you have, during the whole Office, behaved yourself in all Things, as you ought to have done, you will scarcely fail,

IV. In the last Place, in a regular Discharge of those Duties which will arise to you after your Confirmation.

Besides the general repeated Promise, which you make herein, of living from henceforth a sober, righteous, and godly Life, it is an Order of our Church, in particular, that *none shall be admitted to the holy Communion, until such Time as he be confirmed, or be ready and desirous to be confirmed.* This is the principal Duty, that follows Confirmation, comprehending the Practice of all the rest, before it can be worthily received; as it is the End of the Gospel Covenant, and completes your Admission into the Congregation of Christ's Flock at your Baptism. The Obligation, which that laid upon you, is to be made good by many repeated Acts of Duty and Obedience; for by the Performance of that alone can you secure your Title to all the Benefits, which the Gospel holds out to you; and therefore you are cautiously reminded of the Importance of that Oath, on which your *All* depends, by putting you often in Remembrance of what you have sworn.

Upon this Account, you are required, as often as you have Opportunity, to repair to the Lord's Table; where you may give fresh Assurance to Heaven of your Willingness to ratify your Part of the Treaty of Grace,
which

which you have entered into, and will receive new Strength from thence to promote these good Beginnings in Holiness. The Communion is so immediately connected with the Rite of Confirmation, that it is the only remaining Means of convincing yourselves and others, that you do not repent of your Engagement; that you remember the Promise you have made, and are steadily resolved to keep it.

“ Art thou then resolved to persevere in thy Christian Profession, and art thou earnestly desirous to walk worthy of thy Vocation? Be careful to renew thy Covenant with God in the holy Sacrament: Reflect on the glorious Advantages thou enjoyest, and the Conditions on which thou holdest them. Look back on the past Occurrences of thy Life, and weigh thy Actions in a just and impartial Ballance. What Good thou hast done, be ready to ascribe to God’s gracious and powerful Assistance, but all thy Ill to thy own Depravity and Corruption.” Dr. Snape’s Ser. Vol. II. Ser. II.

And if at any Time after you have been devoutly partaking of the blessed Sacrament, you find yourselves tempted either by the Naughtiness of your own Hearts, or by the Deceitfulness of outward Objects, to the Commission of any of your former Sins, correct yourselves with this seasonable Restraint, *How can I do this great Wickedness, and Sin against God?* “ No. This Sin I have renounced in the Presence of God, and at his holy Altar. Too well I know the fatal Consequences of it, having already been overcome by it. But no more will I suffer it to prevail over me. I will live like one in Covenant with God, like one redeemed by the Blood of Christ, touched with a lively Sense of the Benefits he has purchased for me: and aspiring with all the Faculties of my Soul, after those glorious

“ glorious and immortal Joys reserved in Heaven for
“ all the faithful Members of his Body.” *Ibid. Ser. 3.*

The Grace, which we receive by the Holy Sacrament, does not begin our spiritual Life, but continue it : For they, who by Baptism have laid the Foundation, and attained the first Beginning of a new Life, have here the Nourishment and Food of their Souls prescribed for the Continuance of that new Life in them. Upon this Account, the Church has, in all Ages, made Confirmation, the Corner-Stone, as it were, of the Christian Building, which unites its Two Sacraments together, in the Bond of Obedience and a godly Life.

It is accordingly the pious Wish of the late Bishop *Gibson*, that the Desire of Parents to see their Children confirmed, were always accompanied with a Desire to see them at the Lord's Table, and with a sincere Intention and Resolution to make them Partakers of that holy Ordinance. And he thinks, that the Minister, who presents them to the Bishop, as fit to be confirmed, may reasonably expect that you should declare your Intention to come to the Lord's Table at the next Opportunity that shall offer after your Confirmation. For this Reason, you ought not to be eager of being admitted to this Rite too young : The Age of Sixteen is reckoned by the good Prelate, as the properest Time : For as no Person can be supposed to take upon himself his Baptismal Vow *seriously* and in *earnest*, who is not also desirous, and duly qualified, to renew it from Time to Time, at the holy Communion : so the plain Reason, why such Numbers of those, who are confirmed, do afterwards utterly disregard the Lord's Table, is that they are confirmed so long before they are really fit to come to it, and either do not know, or forget, that one End of their Confirmation was to prepare them for it.

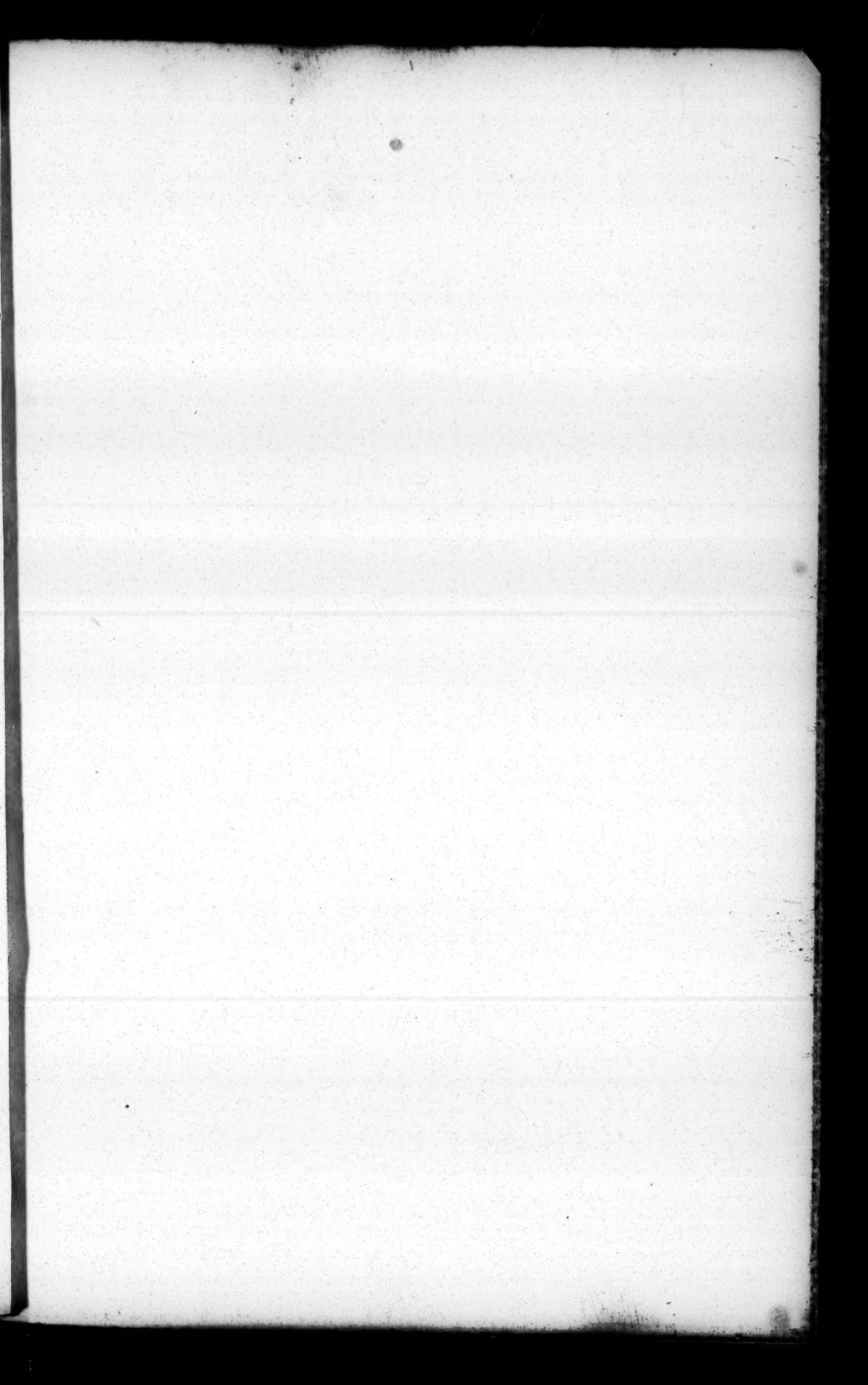
The

24 *A Preparatory Discourse, &c.*

The great God of Heaven and Earth grant, that as you are about to take upon yourselves the Profession of Christianity, so you may be careful to live always in such a Manner, that you *may adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all Things*: That the *Grace of God which bringeth Salvation*, may teach you to deny Ungodliness and worldly Lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly in this present World, looking for that blessed Hope, and the glorious Appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. *AMEN.*

18 JA 53

F I N I S.



4224 e 46